

3 former execs plead guilty in CA asbestos case

By Associated Press

In the Modesto Bee, Wed., March 13, 2013

MERCED, Calif. -- Three former executives of a now-defunct nonprofit have been convicted of violating federal asbestos laws when the former Castle Air Force Base in Atwater was cleaned up.

The Merced Sun-Star reports (<http://bit.ly/XGHDAm>) Rudy Buendia, Patrick Bowman and Joseph Cuellar each pleaded guilty Monday to one count of breaking a federal law for hazardous air pollutants. Bowman and Cuellar will face 27 months in prison according to a plea agreement, while Buendia will face a two-year term. They are scheduled to be sentenced June 3.

The three men were charged in 2010 and were accused of using at least nine high school vocational students to remove asbestos from an old building between 2005 and 2006.

Boysen's Air Cleaning Paint Comes to the US

By Environmental Imports, Inc.

Sacramento Bee, Wed., Mar. 13, 2013

REDWOOD CITY, Calif., March 13, 2013 -- /PRNewswire/ -- In an unprecedented nod to Filipino paint innovation, US-based Environmental Imports, Inc. has reached an agreement with Pacific Paint (Boysen®) Philippines, Inc. to distribute KNOxOUT™ Air Cleaning Paint in the United States.

KNOxOUT has made waves in the paint industry as the first air-cleaning paint in the world with CristalActiv™ technology and its ability to reduce noxious air pollutants.

At the heart of CristalActiv technology is specially designed ultrafine titanium dioxide (TiO₂), which has been used to reduce NOx emissions in power plants and motor vehicles for over 30 years. Cristal, the world's leading producer of ultrafine titanium dioxide (TiO₂), chose Boysen to be their first partner for using CristalActiv in paint formulations.

In KNOxOUT, CristalActiv uses light energy to break down nitrogen oxide (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (the two components of smog) into harmless substances through a process called photocatalysis. The process requires only light and humidity for activation, and because the air cleaning TiO₂ is merely a catalyst and does not get used up in the reaction, a surface painted with KNOxOUT is able to continuously clean the air as long as the paint is on the wall. In essence, it transforms ordinary painted surfaces into air purifiers.

"We are thrilled to embark on this partnership with Boysen to introduce KNOxOUT to the US," says Paul Rode, CEO for Environmental Imports, Inc.

"Air pollution is a problem in most major cities around the world," says Johnson Ongking, Vice President of Boysen. "Eliminating emissions of NOx and other air pollutants would be the best solution but that is not yet possible in today's world. Painting a wall with KNOxOUT is one of the few ways for people to take an active part in cleaning out the NOx that we put in the air. By transforming ordinary walls into air purifiers with a few brushstrokes, people all over the world can be part of the movement for cleaner air."

Both Environmental Imports, Inc. and Boysen are confident that this collaboration would create a resounding impact in efforts against air pollution in the United States. "KNOxOUT's hands-on approach will empower citizens and corporations of all of our communities to work together to fight air pollution and its harmful effects."

California environmental review law backers rally at Capitol

By Torey Van Oot

Capitol Alert, Wed., March 13, 2013

The battle over the future of California's environmental review law waged on Tuesday, as a coalition of environmental groups, tribal organizations and labor unions rallied against the prospect of changes.

A push to rewrite the California Environmental Quality Act appears to have gained some traction in the Legislature this year, with Gov. Jerry Brown and Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg saying the law is in need of an update. Steinberg, who has introduced a framework bill on the topic, has held a series of meetings with advocates on both sides of the fight.

The law's defenders, coming together under the flag of "Common Ground California," doubled down on their efforts at Tuesday's press conference on the Capitol steps. California Labor Federation Executive Secretary Treasurer Art Pulaski blasted the calls for changes Tuesday, saying the law is "under attack by corporations and large-scale developers."

"An attack on CEQA is an attack on our workers, is an attack on our families and is an attack on our communities," he said.

Kathy Fairbanks, a spokeswoman for a coalition that is calling for changes, said the CEQA Working Group's members support protecting the essence of the law. She said they will continue to work with Steinberg and other members to cut down on lawsuits filed for "non-environmental reasons" and other abuses of the law.

"We join our friends in the labor and environmental communities in calling for the preservation of CEQA's most important provisions that protect the environment. However, we believe strongly that we can and must modernize the law to protect its intent of environmental protection while limiting abuses that are derailing vital job-creating projects that improve our communities," she said in a statement.

The pro-CEQA coalition sought to counter critics' claims that the law is holding back projects that are good for the economy and the environment by releasing a report Tuesday that details the law's positive impacts on the state.

Bob Balgenorth, who chairs the Labor Management Cooperation Trust that commissioned the report, acknowledged that the law has been abused in some cases, but argued it has "facilitated greater construction, a cleaner environment and a better quality of life for every Californian."

"In a Democracy you're always going to have somebody who games the system one way or another," he said. "What's important is what this did for the state of California. Did it grow the state of California? Did it make a better environment? Is there a better way to do that? I don't know if there's a better way to do it or not, but we do know that 40 years ago we got this right and we're better than the rest of the nation."

Proponents of overhauling the law suffered a setback when Democratic Sen. Michael Rubio, a major champion of change who chaired the Environmental Quality Committee, stepped down last month. Still, dozens of bills aimed at revising the law have been introduced, and proponents of change remain optimistic.

Sen. Tom Berryhill, R-Twain Harte, has introduced a bill that he says would make many of the same changes Rubio advocated. He disputed claims Tuesday that the essence of the law is under attack, saying it is his goal to get rid of frivolous lawsuits. He said his proposal is "good for business and it's good for California."

"We're not asking to waive anything here but we are asking to expedite the process so people can build and that people can get back to work," he said.